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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The editors are not responsible for opinions expressed in this department. Letters should not exceed 250 words in length and should be accompanied by the name and address of the writer.

### "COWBIRDS"

DEAR EDITOR: I am one of the "urban sisters who missed the joys of bird-nesting." I have, however, traveled widely in this country and I have seen nursing organizations and administrations "from the coast of Maine to the coast of California." Undoubtedly, in a profession as large as ours, there are a great many cowbirds, but as an advertisement of a popular morning beverage states, "There's a reason." Our nursing organizations, national, state and local, have gotten into a serious rut of being, what one might call, undemocratic; and parallel to the phrase "once a cowbird, always a cowbird," could be voiced by the younger nurses of the organization, "once a president or an officer of a national, state, or local organization, always a president. . . etc." There are some birds in the nursing profession who do give birth to ideas which they would like to hatch and feed and develop, but there is no nest vacant for them in which to lay their eggs and they must forsooth lay them in the nest of the ever-setting president, etc., and I am sorry to say that after the birds are hatched, even though they be little cowbirds, the little red identifying tips on their wings are destroyed so that even the mother who gave birth to the idea and did not have the opportunity to hatch it, is denied the further opportunity of nursing it and developing it.

I think the time has definitely come when the older members of our profession must recognize that they do not, like the judges of our superior courts, ascend the bench for life. Every person, no matter how lowly, aspires to public recognition and appreciation of service rendered or experience gained, and it is not fair to the younger nurses of the profession generally, to allow these sole proprietorships to go on forever. All over the country there is murmuring among the rank and file that there is such a limited space at the top and that a selected few get all the honors. Of course the statement is constantly being made that So and So has developed the organization and that there is nobody else to

take her place. This, it seems to me, is a marked weakness which runs through our ranks and is reflected in the work we do in hospitals, public health nurse organizations, et cetera. Over and over again we see pieces of work go to smash because they have been absolutely built up by individuals who were not big enough to develop understudies. This might be a very good time for the American Nurses' Association to take stock of the various state and local organizations and find out once and for all why we have cowbirds, why we continue to have cowbirds, and how we can exterminate cowbirds.

Washington

ANN DOYLE

### WHY SHE GAVE UP NIGHT DUTY

DEAR EDITOR:

My patients have told me I snore,  
A fact I most sadly deplore;  
For myself I can't weep,  
For I am asleep;  
It's the ones I wake up that get sore.

New York

L. M.

### FIRES OF VARIOUS KINDS IN KOREA

DEAR EDITOR: Yesterday there were two fires at our hospital, one in the morning and one in the evening. The first was one which is kindled by that "unruly member." One nurse lent her ring to a probationer who left it in a basin of water. Another nurse threw water and ring away at the same time, and you may guess the rest. There were tears, and angry words, and many unworthy feelings to be soothed and corrected. As they all sat down to supper, I hesitated before going to the house for my supper for fear the clash would begin again. Just as I sat down to the table, the church bell began ringing for evening service and in a few moments the "Come to church, come to church," sound rang out into the "tang, tang, tang," of a fire alarm. I sprang to the window to see where. To my horror the flames were licking high above the roof of our hospital! The first glance made me think of the wood

yard where pine tops have just been stacked for lighting hospital fires. One ward is very near the wood. As I sped to the gate, my mind whirled round as to how we could get all the patients to a safe place and what effect such excitement would have on the helpless ones with weak hearts, etc. My fingers were all thumbs as I tried to unfasten the combination lock at the gate, but I finally got through, and what a relief to find it a separate building and not the wood which would have made a more furious fire. It was bad enough. The carpenter's shop and the cotton machine, tools and new lumber, with the baked beans made up into loaves ready to use in making "chong" an essential part of the Korean tray,—all this was soon charred black. The nurses forgot their quarrel and we formed a bucket line to the well and passed water in face basins, pitchers, bath tubs, buckets and anything handy. Most of the patients kept their places though some bundled up their belongings ready to leave if necessary.

We all felt how merciful God was to us in that there was not a breath of wind the day of the fire while the day preceding and today the wind is fierce.

Kunsan, Chosen

LILLIE O. LATHROP.

#### A SUPERINTENDENT'S WORRIES

**D**EAR EDITOR: Ting a ling. "No, we have no one by that name here." Who has her afternoon off today? Is the office girl here? Who relieves for time? Do we need anything in supply? Did that patient in No. 17 with eclampsia die? Ting a ling! "No, there is no umbrella here, she must have taken it." But the eggs are scrambled except a dozen or so. Will you please pay the meat man that bill we owe? A doctor enters and wants a room right away for a man with the gout who cannot afford to pay. A probationer arrives with sobs shaking her frame, "She's too mean, I won't stay." A head nurse arrives, she can't do anything with her probationer. She has told her to answer those bells but she is slow as a toad. The bread man, the milk man, the butter man and egg man too, come stringing in with bills that are due. Ting a ling! "No, Dr. Miller has just gone, we don't know where." The meals for the

patients, nurses, and help must be arranged. The head nurse rebels because her time cannot be changed; the junior nurse knows some one who has two tickets for a show; could not she have late permission in order to go? The president and board are coming on an inspection tour. A man cannot pay his bill; he says he is too poor. A doctor comes in with a puckered brow, "Say, do you know those glass syringes don't work." I was dressing Patsy's leg and instead of the solution going where it should, it shot in his eye and there is the dickens to pay. "If you have any more of them throw them away." Ting a ling! "Yes, she is better this morning." The operating nurse arrives with a tale of woe, the autoclave door blew off and just missed her head. The stenographer was so busy she forgot an important letter. The dietitian stated that they sent old-tasting butter. The meat man brought pork instead of lamb chops and hoped we would not mind. The surgical maid lost her soap and could not find her scrub bucket. A doctor entered and wanted a special nurse for a day; he thought the patient would be able to pay. A special nurse complained that she lost a uniform that she brought into the dressing room. The state reports must be made out at once. A baby won't nurse and makes his appeal for help in nutrition by a very lusty squeal. The coal man arrives with a load of coal. This is not all that taxes the superintendent.

Can you not see how much she has to do, and yet she directs the classes and floor work too. When I look back on training days, I think of our superintendent and her trouble with us and her wonderful character and tact. We respected her and admired her capability to do the right thing. She always had time to listen and aid when we told her our troubles.

Pennsylvania

I. E. B.

#### A TRANSPORT TRIP

**D**EAR EDITOR: Several reports have been written covering the chief points of our duty on transports, but my recent journey of 15,000 miles, covering 100 days, was such a delightful trip that I am sending a brief outline hoping it may prove of interest to the nurse readers. We arrived at Hampton